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Current Literature

Book Reviews

The Psychology of Ego-Involvements. By Muzafer Sherif and Hadley Cantril. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., New York, 1947. Pp. viii+525. $6.00.

According to the authors, it is not yet time to present an adequate definition of "ego." Nevertheless they do regard it as opportune to impute certain characteristics to the concept and to write a book about it.

The ego is neither innate nor instinctive in the usual sense of these adjectives. There are two necessary conditions for its genesis: a symbolic level of psychological functioning and a "lawfully ordered world of . . . social relationships." The authors subscribe to the view that "the psychology of the early period of ego formation seems to be one of the firmly established principles of ego psychology," but they also regard adolescence as a period of "re-formation" of the ego.

Although the authors do not claim to have made a survey of the literature, they do bring together a considerable volume of the research materials bearing upon their subject under the general headings of attitude, ego-involvements, genetic formation of the ego, re-formation of the ego in adolescesce, ego-involvements in social situations, and breakdowns of the ego.

The final chapter is devoted to a consideration and rejection of psycho-analytic formulations although the authors do implicitly concede that Freud provided insight into the understanding of unconscious motivation. Incidentally, they imply their intent to produce a further work on "the all important topics of motivation and personality."

This reviewer has been unable to find any particularly novel formulations in this volume but regards it as valuable because of its extensive and systematic (if incomplete) treatment of the research literature on an important list of social psychological topics. For those who may have studied their social psychology in terms of an alternative jargon it might be added that these topics include the rise of the self, the internalization of the moral order, group identifications, changing conceptions of the self, and situations precipitating personal disorganization.

In the reviewer's personal interest in keeping the record straight, he would like to add that while the quotation from his own doctoral dissertation (page 227) may sound to the unwary reader like an auto-biographical statement, it really is a quotation from one of a series of personal documents collected from several hundred subjects.

ROBERT F. WINCH

Vanderbilt University

Readings in Social Psychology. Edited by Theodore M. Newcomb, Eugene L. Hartley and others. Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1947. Pp. 672. $3.85.

This book is a symposium prepared for the Committee on the Teaching of Social Psychology of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. It is a veritable mine of recent psychological concepts and findings. In this one volume are collected outstanding contributions of the last two decades or so. Piaget's "Social Factors in Moral Development," Thomas and Znaniecki's "The Definition of the Situation," Allport's "The J-Curve Hypothesis of Conforming Behavior" and George H. Mead's "Language and the Development of the Self" are examples of the type of material selected.

The volume is organized around sixteen areas such as socialization of the child, language, social frustration, role and status, social class, prejudice, public opinion, and war and peace. There is such a mass of material that an index would have been indicated. The detailed Table of Contents, however, is adequate for the oriented reader.

Such a symposium of source material should be invaluable to the serious student of human behavior. The book can be especially recommended also to those whose library resources are limited.

EVELYN MILLIS DUVALL

Chicago

The Family In American Culture. By Andrew G. Truxall and Francis E. Merrill. Prentice-Hall, New York, 1947. Pp. 780. $5.65.

This book is a decided improvement over several current books on the family in that there is greater appreciation for the reciprocity of influence between family and the rest of society. Instead of asserting, or worse, implying without making it explicit, that the family is primarily a creature of the technological aspect of society or of interpersonal dynamics or of some ideological foundation, these authors embrace a breadth of theoretical vision which is commendable.

The originality and worth of the book lie not in a unique organization but in such virtues as lucid writing, careful handling of theory, avoidance of particularism, and a substantial documentation, using for the most part authoritative materials. This book should enjoy a large and deserved popularity as a college textbook on the family in American culture.

JOHN F. CUBER

The Ohio State University

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